10: d'Orleans--314-315 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 153, 823

"The truth is that they have not much learning, these Laotians, despite the religious instruction [315] which they have received; but upon the other hand they know their country well, are fairly familiar with geography, possessing a good idea of distances, and also having a good memory for historical occurences, while their annals are in good order and are well kept."

10: d'Orleans--347-348 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 783, 796, 823

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"Women sprinkle water over the chief bonze, and others bolder still, come and pour the contents of their jar over some young student. This custom of sprinkling or pouring water, which is also to be met with at certain festivals in Siam and Burmah, would not be so suprising if it were confined to the priests, but here the girls pick up mud and plaster the faces of the young men, whoever they may be, and our white dresses tempt them so much that we are obliged to assume a very stern look in order to keep them at a distance. The young men, however, are too gallant to resent these attentions, and as for the bonzes, they get something better than water offered them, as presents are made them in the shape of pans full of food, which are handed to two men who accompany the chair.

When the procession reaches Ouate Sieng Tong, it enters the courtyard, and the bonzes, after reciting [348] the usual prayers, enter a sort of shed surrounded by planks and having upon the top the same water conduit which has been used for sprinkling water over the gods. The women pour their water into this conduit, which flows down over the priests, who emerge from the shed purified and washed, but dripping wet, though this they do not seem to mind."

10: d'Orleans--353-354 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 644, 783, 823

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"The king comes and greets us after he has taken his tea; he seems to be amiable and intelligent, but, as at all our other interviews, timid and ill at ease, especially with the Siamese Colonel upon the one side and us upon the other. As soon as our audience is over, he ascends the small wooden construction over which the water conduit is placed, and his servitors bring him one after the other several jugs of water which he pours into it and which trickle down, drop by drop, upon a Buddha placed on [354] a gilt chair in an adjoining building."

10: d'Orleans--367 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 183, 823

"The rapids have no special name 'We call them,' say our boatmen, 'what we have heard our fathers call them. The rapids were made by God with the world, like the mountains and the rivers.' "

25: Brodrick--96-97 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians-1-3
116, 776, 769, 782, 823

"Although the people of the Laos are happy-go-lucky and carefree, and their mild and mitigated Little Vehicle Buddhism sits lightly upon them, the spirits are ever-present. Still, to this day, in a country where men are naturally, it seems, hospitable and open-handed, no stranger will be invited until the spirits have given their permission sought by offerings to them of five candles of pure beeswax, five frangipani flowers, five incense-sticks and a bottle of rice-alcohol.

All that happens to hurt man is the work of spirits. For 'primitive' men--and the Laotians, despite their real if rustic civilization, maintain many of the reactions and fundamental beliefs of 'primitives' --disaster, and the greatest of all disasters, death, is not 'normal' or 'natural.' In the Land of the Laos, the p'hi-lok or manes of the ancestors are jealous beings, easy to take offence and these p'hi or spirits and the ho or demons must receive propitiatory sacrifices. There is a similar underlying fear and faith in Cambodia but they are better hid. But in the Laos it may be said that all believe that ghosts come back at night in animal shape to plague the living. In animal shape. The archaic ideas which we tend to label rather too easily as 'totemistic' are all vaguely interwined with feelings rather than definable dogmas, feelings of some close relation between man and other animals.

With the p'hi-lok, who sow terror, and the p'hi phob, or evil spirits, are the numberless demons of the woods and the guardian genii of the wild. The forests are fearsome

places and best avoided. The old travellers told a terrible tale of the Forest of the King of [97] Fire, the Dong-Phaja-Fai, through which you had to climb to reach Korat,(1) and

1. Korat, of course, is in modern Siam, but it is in Laotian land. Mgr. Pellegoix's entertaining Description du Royaume de Siam was published in 1854.

the journey took five whole days. The awful name, alone, of this dread jungle spread terror, and countless wayfarers never came through the deep shades, since as Pellegoix relates, in an effort, doubtless, to rationalize the legends, here and there in this jungle, the earth contains 'mineral arsenic' whose dust the passer-by breathes and with it death.

If the Laotian goes into the jungle, ill may befall him, and surely will if he there spends the night. He may disappear for ever or he may be transported to an enchanted land wherein, for long years he may chase phantoms and illusions and if he manages, at last, to escape from this bewitched realm, when he reaches his hut he will not be recognized by his relations who, having mourned him as dead, have long ceased to think of him and will be most embarrassed and annoyed at his reappearance--or, if he shuns such adventures, he will emerge from the great woods as a sick man, the demons have struck him with malignant fever, dragging him to the grave in a few short days.

25: Brodrick--96-97 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians-3
116, 776, 769, 782, 823

Picanon told a curious tale of what he experienced, years ago, when he was living on Khone island, right in the south near the Khong cataracts and the Cambodian frontier. After a day of torrential showers and violent storms, in the evening as he was finishing his dinner in his house, two young women ran in upon him and threw themselves trembling at his feet imploring him for aid and for protection. Thinking that some brigand was after the women, Picanon reached for his gun and made to go out on to the veranda, but the girls sobbed to him not to venture forth alone for a p'hi had called to them and cursed them at the very moment they were passing the house. They tottered with him out of the windows and pointed to a bushy mango-tree in a rice-field nearby. On the tree was a bird, luminiferous in the moonlight. It flew screeching away as Picanon fired a charge of shot in its direction, and the women were reassured."

68: Mouhot--99 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 776, 823, 789

"I am at the gates of the infernal regions, for so the Laotians and Siamese designate this forest, [HD: i.e. Dong Phya Phia, the forest of the 'King of Fire', between Khao-Khoc and Korat in Siam] and I have no spell to terrify the demons which inhabit it, neither tiger's teeth nor stunted stag-horn; nothing but my faith in and love for God. If I must die here, where so many other wanderers have left their bones, I shall be ready when my hour comes."

68: Mouhot--110 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 484, 776, 823, 579

"As for the Laotians, I have found them, although superstitious, very courageous, especially those who traverse this forest [HD: i.e. Dong Phya Phia, the forest of the 'King of Fire', between Khao-Khoc and Korat in Siam] eight or ten times a year. Some of them even venture to awake the 'King of Fire' by bringing down game or shooting at robbers: yet death , even in the best season, carries off one or two out of every ten who travel here. I think the number of those who fall victims to this terrible journey must be considerable in the rainy season, when every torrent overflows its bounds; the whole soil is soaked, the pathways nothing but bogs, and the rice-grounds covered with several feet of water. After five or six days' walking through all this, with feet in the mud, the body in a profuse perspiration, and breathing a fetid atmosphere, hot as a stove and reeking with putrid miasma, what wonder that many sink and die?"

68: Mouhot--112 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 776, 823, 579

"Our guides are all Laotians from the neighbourhood of Korat, and their leader is unremitting in his care and attention towards me. Every evening he prepares my place for the night, levelling the ground and cutting down branches which he covers with leaves, and I am thus raised from the earth and protected from the dew. These guides lead a hard life, tramping in all seasons along these wretched roads, having scarcely time, morning and evening, to swallow a little rice, and having but little sleep at nights, tormented by ants, and exposed to the attacks of robbers, against whom they have constantly to be on their guard."

585 In front of the bride's house, guards make a sham defence of the gate of the house. The husband and his retinue can enter only by making a gift of money or alcohol. When he reaches the stairway of the house, the young man may only climb it after having his feet washed on a piece of stone covered with a banana leaf by the sisters or the women servants of the bride. He must pay for this service, then seat himself in front of the two ritual phakhouan next to his [801] bride, who is already sitting there. The Sou Khouan of the wedding resembles the bassi. However at the wedding there are only two phakhouan and everything in the ceremony must be in even numbers. They are, however, larger and better decorated than the ordinary phakhouan. The marriage is celebrated by two individuals officiating who recite sacramental formulas in duet. Then, after tying a large number of cotton threads around their wrists, the married couple prostrate themselves before each of the aged people and those who are present. They are then led to their room by a lady chosen from among the most virtuous.

Funerals

764 In Laos as in all Buddhist countries, the dead are burned. How-
766 ever, a distinction is made between two kinds of death, normal death and accidental (drowning, suicide or violent death). The dead of the second category must be buried within twenty-four hours. The story is told of a peasant's wife who, having died in childbirth, was quickly cut up in pieces by the villagers who scattered them to the four winds so that she would not become a wandering soul capable of tormenting the living.

764 [58] When there is a death in a house, the body is bathed with tepid water, then with cold water. It is then perfumed and dressed. Two garments are put on it, one wrong side out, the other right side out. The former symbolizes death, the latter life, for the favorite garment of the dead person while alive was chosen. His hair is then combed and he is shackled with a white cotton thread, for he must not return to the world of the living. The same thread is used to wrap around his neck, to tie his two hands together, and his two feet together. This bond must not be cut, so a knot is made at each place where it is attached. This thread also shows man how illusory are the bonds which tie him to the world. Then the body is wrapped in [823] a shroud. It is laid parallel with the largest dimension of the house, [342] as opposed to the living who always lie in the direction of its width.

342 bedrooms separated from each other by partitions or curtains, the
[778] other is the communal room. In the space between the inner and outer beam, and not limited by the longitudinal partition, is the altar on which there are always one or several buddhas. It is placed on the side of the bedrooms, on the "soung" side of the dwelling, that is on the side opposite the entrance. The dimensions of the dwellings vary between six and twenty-four meters long by four to nine meters wide.

342 The houses are most often open to the east or to the north. They
823 may also overlook what is passing by in the streets or the paths and, as the case may be, the whole length of the river. For there is a superstition which forbids building "across the current," which is considered as unconquerable and invincible, and it would be dangerous to defy it.

343 The outhouses consist of an adjoining kitchen and a granary, a
[752] few meters removed from the principal dwelling. Near this granary is found the picturesque rice pestle (khok khao) which the women work with their feet.

343 [62] All the villagers participate in building the house. When the
476 propitious day and moment have been determined, the owner feeds everybody the whole time the house is being built.

Tattooing

301 Every self-respecting Laotian must be tattooed. The absence of
885 tattooing is a sign of mental and moral, therefore of social, inferiority.
562 As a general rule, however, the Laotian woman is not tattooed. This custom is found only among the women of Youan, Kha or Lu.

301 The Laotian is tattooed chiefly on his thighs, forearms and chest. The tattooing on the thighs is so close together that from a distance a tattooed man looks as if he were wearing close-fitting blue shorts. The Laotians are called "white bellies" as opposed to those who are tattooed down to the navel and are then called black bellies. The colors used for tattooing are indigo blue, red, and black made from a mixture of lampblack diluted with buffalo gall.

[751] Those who have been tattooed are convinced that the signs they wear give them certain supernatural powers, particularly making them invulnerable to bullets and snake bites. During the events of 1941 Siamese soldiers were found wearing white cotton vests covered with cabalistic signs closely related to tattooing. These are a kind of removable tattooing intended to protect those who are wearing them.

301 The use of these magic shirts is also known in Cambodia. The designs
262 usually consist of flowers, geometric figures, tools, flowers, vegetable
751 branches, and of animals. Sometimes pictures drawn from Buddhist iconography can be recognized.

[74] Apparently the origin of tattooing is to be found in totemism. By
301 analyzing the Laotian tattooing designs, [63] it has been possible to recognize traces of sun worship, as well as the mythological role of the dog. But at the present time Laotians seem only to value tattooing as an artistic ornament.

The Divining Rod.

787 Among the curios which the tourist looks for in Laos, the most
• 823 easily found is a carved bamboo cane. Immediately below the head,
825 which is often of chased silver, there is a sort of checkered diagram made up of twenty-five little squares. Below this divining diagram are found, in succession from top to bottom, a zebu, a horse, a rakshasha or ogre, a tiger, a buffalo, a deer, an elephant. These animals correspond respectively to the days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

It should be noted that, except for the buffalo and the deer, the others are the symbolical animals of the zodiac and correspond to the different cardinal points.

The Laotians consult these figures at different actions of their lives: choice of a wedding day, the hour for burial, etc. The diagram is used to calculate the hour, and the animals indicate the cardinal point which should be followed.

This cane is also found among the Man.

[64] THE NEW YEAR AND THE FEASTS OF THE FIFTH MONTH

527 The Laotian New Year always takes place between the 6th day
805 of the crescent moon of the 5th month and the 5th day of the crescent moon of the 6th month. The very core of the feast includes three days: the last day of the past year, the intermediate day and the New Year's day, properly so-called. The most picturesque ceremonies are those of Luang Prabang, for there tradition has been best preserved.

527 The programme of the feasts begins with a procession of royal elephants. Their heads ornamented with red and black painted designs, their drivers dressed in red tunics with yellow lapels, on their backs, the fifteen elephants go to the pagodas of Xieng Tong, Vat